

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :
 :
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
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INTERVIEW OF: OS2 [REDACTED]

Tuesday,
October 13, 2015

USCG Seventh District Command Center
Miami, Florida

BEFORE:

JON FURUKAWA, NTSB
DENNIS BRYSON, ABS
PATTY FINSTERBUSCH, TOTE Services
PAUL WEBB, U.S. Coast Guard

PRESENT ON BEHALF OF THE INTERVIEWEE:

CDR [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard JAG Corps

This transcript was produced from audio
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

OS2 [REDACTED]

TAKEN ON

13 OCT 2015

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING
3	10-11	TRIPLE E	This is likely a misinterpretation. I am not familiar with "Triple E"
10	1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
15	21	She	He
16	22	Cricket	Crooked
18	19	On-sea	On scene
22	11	Coggershaw	Coggeshall
22	16	Coggershaw	Coggeshall
30	21	LAN	LANT
30	21	LAN	LANT

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement "no corrections needed" and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEEDED.

Initials

[REDACTED]
Printed Name of Person providing the above information

[REDACTED]
Signature of Person providing the above information

03- Dec - 2015.

Date

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

7:19 p.m.

MR. FURUKAWA: It is Tuesday, the 13th of October 2015. The time is 1919 and we are in Miami, Florida at the District U.S. Coast Guard District 7 Command Center. We're here to interview Operation Specialist Second Class [REDACTED] who was the search and rescue OU.

[REDACTED] can you tell me what watches you had during this? Oh, hang on a sec.

OS2 [REDACTED] Yes.

MR. FURUKAWA: And for the transcriber, this is John Furukawa with the NTSB.

MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patricia Finsterbusch, TOTE Services.

MR. BRYSON: Dennis Bryson, ABS.

MR. WEBB: Paul Webb, U.S. Coast Guard.

CDR [REDACTED] This is Commander [REDACTED] CG JAG as representative for Mr. [REDACTED]

OS2 [REDACTED] And this is Petty Officer

[REDACTED]
MR. FURUKAWA: Thanks, [REDACTED] And Petty Officer [REDACTED] can I just call you [REDACTED]

OS2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED] you can just call me

1 John. Can you tell us what watches you had during the
2 SAR for the SS El Faro?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes. I had the mid watch on
4 the first. And as we stated, the mid watch goes from 6
5 p.m. to 6 a.m. And again, I'd have to check the
6 schedule, as we discussed earlier, to ensure that I'm
7 stating factual of when I was there, but I also did
8 stand two watches a couple of days after the first.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, which you think are?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] Triple E was at some time in
11 the weekend going into the week days.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, the
13 4th, 5th, and 6th?

14 OS2 [REDACTED] At this point, yes, I'd say
15 that. I'm just not 100 percent sure yet.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And let's see, so for
17 the 1st, Thursday, the 1st of October, what time did
18 you report to work?

19 OS2 [REDACTED] I usually get to work, I'm not
20 sure exactly what time I did, but generally, I come to
21 work about a half early just to prepare myself for the
22 watch.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: About 1730?

24 OS2 [REDACTED] Approximately, yes, sir.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Your background, [REDACTED] how

1 old are you?

2 OS2 [REDACTED] I'm 29 years old.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Twenty-nine. And how long
4 have you been in the Coast Guard?

5 OS2 [REDACTED] I've been in the Coast Guard
6 for over eight years.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: And can you tell me about the
8 eight years in the Coast Guard, your career so far?

9 OS2 [REDACTED] Sure. Went to boot camp
10 first. Then I went to A school to basically learn my
11 trade which is Operation Specialist. After that, I
12 went to Kodiak, Alaska for about a year and a half.
13 Then after that, I went and got stationed in Sector
14 Miami which is a subordinate unit to us, located not
15 too far from here over at Miami Beach. I worked there
16 for five years doing the job that I do now, basically
17 is Operations Unit and a Search and Rescue Duty
18 Officer. And then I've been doing my current job here
19 for one year.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: What were you doing in
21 Kodiak?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] Just monitoring radio
23 frequencies, high-frequency radios. We basically -- it
24 was a COMMSTA Kodiak. It was just basically a repeater
25 station for D17 Sector Anchorage. We basically relay

1 any distress cases that we heard on the radio.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You actually did more
3 than that. COMMSTA Kodiak is -- at the time basically
4 a subunit of CAMSPAC and they have an HF coverage for
5 the Bering Sea and off Alaska and North Pacific.
6 Besides monitoring for SAR alerts, May Days and things
7 like that, they also keep the aircraft COM schedule for
8 the C-130s and the 60s which is pretty important up
9 there because of the remoteness as he says traveling,
10 so don't under employ yourself out there.

11 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir. Thank you.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, and getting back on
13 track with which I went into and backtracked. At 1730,
14 you reported to work on Thursday, the 1st of October.
15 Just go ahead and tell us about your watch and when you
16 became aware of the SS El Faro.

17 OS2 [REDACTED] So I came into watch at
18 approximately 1730 as you stated. We do our formal
19 pass down at 6 o'clock local time where we all gather
20 around the table. And that's when the facts of the
21 case became known to me. I believe I was relieved by
22 [REDACTED] (phonetic) who you guys spoke with. He
23 was in the day watch and I was coming in to relieve him
24 for the night watch. And that's when all the -- the
25 facts that we knew at that time, that's when I was made

1 aware.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Any questions about relieving
3 process? No.

4 Well, can you go on? What else happened
5 next?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] And then from that point
7 basically my duties for the night, as you know, the
8 hurricane was still over, at that point, on the 1st.
9 So my duties for the night were to make sure I keep in
10 contact with the hurricane hunters who are out there
11 operating their aircraft to see if they could have any
12 luck of getting a hold of the El Faro. So they were
13 making call outs as they were doing their hurricane
14 hunting duties.

15 And then my job was to try to begin search
16 planning for the next morning. And it was understood
17 that this storm would very likely be in the area which
18 evidently it was still on the 2nd in the morning. And
19 we couldn't actually access an area toward the last
20 known position of where the ship was. But we did our
21 best search planning based on weather and risk factors.
22 So it was just my duty basically trying to get [REDACTED] so
23 that when he comes in in the morning, some kind of
24 search planning, so that he has something to work off
25 of.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And was that the whole
2 watch until six in the morning?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: And then [REDACTED] relieved
5 you?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Any other questions?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Were you working on
9 some other SAR cases that same night?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] I don't think we were, since I
11 can't really remember exactly if we were or not.
12 There's a lot of smaller SAR cases that do come up, but
13 I don't -- there's nothing significant for me to
14 remember now than I had a relatively quiet night other
15 than, of course, my primary duties of planning for the
16 El Faro.

17 I do remember at some point there was -- I
18 don't remember if that was on the 1st, but there was
19 another case, the Minouche that we did rescue 12 crew
20 members from. Again, I'd just have to look at the date
21 of that. I just don't want to say anything that's
22 false.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was your watch, was
24 it augmented with anybody else?

25 OS2 [REDACTED] For the first night? We're

1 still talking about the first night? I don't think it
2 was. I don't think it was. I didn't have an IMT or
3 anything stood up that night.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Patty?

5 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No questions for you.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Anything else,
7 Dennis?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you asking who
9 else was on watch with him or if there were additional
10 people at that time?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If there were
12 additional, I guess there weren't.

13 OS2 [REDACTED] Right, there were no
14 additional persons.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Paul?

16 MR. WEBB: I don't think I have anything at
17 this point.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: The CDO on watch with you was
19 the first night?

20 OS2 [REDACTED] I'd have to again check the
21 schedule. Do you guys understand how the schedule
22 works? I'm not standing watch with the same person
23 every night.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It would have been

1 [REDACTED].

2 OS2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]? Thanks, sir.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: His brain is still
4 fresh. Okay. And did you leave work about 0600?

5 OS2 [REDACTED] Negative, no. We don't leave
6 at 0600 in the morning because as I stated, we do have
7 formal pass down, so sometimes I can take as long as it
8 really needs to take to make sure that we have all the
9 details.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

11 OS2 [REDACTED] So I can't recall exactly at
12 what time, but it did go on for quite some time because
13 there's a lot of details to pass.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, so you had two
15 days off of leave.

16 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or two days on, three
18 days off? But anyways, your next watch you thought was
19 on Sunday, October 4th, the same hours. Can you tell
20 us about that watch?

21 OS2 [REDACTED] So at that watch, we've
22 reached a battle rhythm with search and rescue
23 planning. So my duties for that night were to come in
24 and basically -- I think [REDACTED] again was my relief. If
25 it wasn't [REDACTED] it was another watch stander. It might

1 have been actually [REDACTED] So my job again
2 was just to come in and do search planning with the
3 search and rescue system that we have and have search
4 planning for them for the morning was my primary duty.

5 Also, in keeping assets, we had Coast Guard
6 cutters on scene, just making sure that they were on
7 task and searching throughout the night.

8 MR. WEBB: This is Paul Webb. Was that
9 watch augmented?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] I think it was that night. I
11 think they had an extra CDO that night, but at that
12 point the IMT had been stood up, so even throughout the
13 daytime I believe that were some extra hands helping
14 out at that point.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Were you just
16 assigned the El Faro?

17 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes. I was strictly tasked to
18 work the El Faro case.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And for that SAR OPS,
20 do you remember what objects you selected for the
21 drift?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] If I can recall, SAR OPS
23 limited us to a 300-foot coastal freighter. I don't
24 know if you've known about that, but 300-foot coastal
25 freight.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

2 OS2 [REDACTED] Life rafts which we were also
3 limited to. We understand the capacity of the El Faro,
4 had larger life rafts than the search and rescue system
5 can actually account for. And a life boat and then
6 persons in the water, I believe.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And did you select
8 those three, too? On that day were you still drifting
9 the shift itself?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] I believe so. I'd have to
11 check again in the system, but I know we did start
12 adding the life rafts and life boats.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: PIW?

14 OS2 [REDACTED] And then the persons in the
15 water, right.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And which of
17 those objects were you guys giving the heaviest weight
18 to?

19 OS2 [REDACTED] We split those up evenly.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that search plan
21 was for the morning sorties?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct, right. And again we
23 had the cutters through the night, searching.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As you're doing the
25 search planning were you also -- were you the one

1 inputting the results from the previous day's search?

2 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay, so you were
4 closing out each of the patterns and getting a POS?

5 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct, right. Yes,
6 validating what the day watch had done, validating
7 those search patterns, ensuring our Coast Guard cutters
8 were continuing the searches through the night and then
9 planning for the next morning's sorties.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How often were you
11 guys re-drifting?

12 OS2 [REDACTED] I believe it was maybe an
13 average of every eight hours we were giving new drifts.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you talk to any
15 of the SAR OPS people from headquarters or Artie Allen
16 (phonetic) the oceanographer?

17 OS2 [REDACTED] Personally, I didn't. I
18 understand that from what I heard was [REDACTED] Eddy
19 (phonetic) did.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [REDACTED] Eddy did?

21 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. He was our SAR
22 specialist, of course.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, and that
24 information was passed to you guys, what he learned
25 from them?

1 OS2 [REDACTED] It was. I don't know if that
2 was passed on the 4th, but it was passed at a search
3 object, I believe. It was a Panga or a skiff-style
4 vessel that they felt was the best search -- one of the
5 best -- a better search object for the scenario. And I
6 remember that was added in.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that was to
8 replace the life boat?

9 OS2 [REDACTED] I believe so, yes. They
10 believe that was better drift models more accurately
11 represented through that search object.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What else? Do you
13 remember what the POS was? What you were getting POS-
14 wise?

15 OS2 [REDACTED] I can't recall, sir.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: What does POS stand for,
17 again?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Probability of
19 success.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Does SAR OPS give you
21 a probability of success?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] It does, yes, sir.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is it cumulative as
24 you search and is it cumulative over a number of
25 searches?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, throughout the
2 night, [REDACTED] when you're in communication with the
3 surface assets there were you changing their search
4 areas at all during the night or providing them with
5 updated information?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] So what we were doing, as I
7 came on to the watch basically, the previous watch the
8 aircraft sorties would be wrapping up at this point
9 because sunset was occurring. So they would already
10 have the search planning done for the Coast Guard
11 cutters through the night and you know, cutters have
12 longer legs, obviously, so they can search for extended
13 amounts of time. So they would be given patterns
14 through the duration of the night.

15 I think maybe on one of the nights, they
16 couldn't get to planning for those cutters for the
17 night sortie and I might have had to just plan which
18 was not a big burden on the watch at all to plan for a
19 cutter sortie.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So all your planning
21 is next day?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct. I've got my cutter
23 searching through the night and I'm planning for the
24 next morning at first light.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: You're saying that you're

1 using a 300-foot vessel, life boat, life raft and was
2 it a person in water also?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct, PIW.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: All four, okay.

5 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: For the second day or the
7 second time you have watch, any other questions?
8 Patty?

9 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: No.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, how about your third
11 watch which you believe was Monday, October 5th.

12 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. Same thing again as I
13 stated for the first one was having the Coast Guard
14 cutter search through the night and again, coming up
15 with a search planning for the morning.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: At that point you
17 still had the augmented watch, you had some extra
18 folks?

19 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. I believe it might
20 have been that night or the night after, but they
21 actually -- I had a CDO that I just worked for. She
22 was strictly dealing with the El Faro case and I was
23 strictly dealing with El Faro case. So 100 percent of
24 our attention was allotted just for case planning.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: That was you and OS1 [REDACTED]?

1 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you tell us anything else
3 about that watch?

4 OS2 [REDACTED] Nothing really comes to mind
5 other than that battle rhythm that we had basically,
6 search planning. And I think that went really smooth
7 from my standpoint.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: What were those things, the
9 C-130s dropped in the water?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: SLDMBs,

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you want to ask him any
12 questions?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many SLDMBs were
14 deployed?

15 OS2 [REDACTED] They dropped the SLDMBs in the
16 daytime, sir. I don't know the exact number, but I
17 understand from what I was passed that the SLDMB data
18 was -- they weren't all 100 percent consistent with
19 each other. Usually, we're used to dealing with let's
20 say a Florida Straits example, they're all moving
21 north. So we're dealing obviously with 36 miles
22 approximately off of the Cricket Island. There were
23 some eddies reported from what [REDACTED] was passing me.
24 And SLDMBs obviously used for surface currents to kind
25 of see where that goes.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you say what SLDMB stands
2 for?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes, it's self-locating datum
4 marker buoy.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

6 OS2 [REDACTED] And it was understood that
7 throughout the day they were finding obviously debris
8 from the El Faro, so we knew that our search area was
9 validated by finding the debris.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How did you know it
11 was El Faro debris?

12 OS2 [REDACTED] There was stenciled on the
13 life ring and this again was found on the day watch. I
14 saw the photos and stuff as I came on for the night
15 watch. El Faro was stenciled on a life ring and then
16 also toward the end of the case as well, on the life
17 boat as well, which was located on the day watch, so I
18 can't speak too much to the location of that. That's
19 how we knew that our area was validated and we were in
20 the right spot from a search planning perspective.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you know if
22 there's any talk or did you think about reverse drift
23 when you found any of the debris, that was found, to
24 reverse drift back?

25 OS2 [REDACTED] It wasn't talked about on the

1 night watch, sir. And I can't speak to the day watch,
2 but I wasn't passed anything about a reverse drift.

3 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: Patty Finsterbusch. Were
4 we still looking for the vessel at that point?

5 OS2 [REDACTED] I believe once we started
6 finding the debris from the El Faro, we started
7 searching, shifting mainly toward survivors at this
8 point.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you ever done
10 reverse drift modeling?

11 OS2 [REDACTED] I have done reverse drift
12 modeling, yes, sir.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: So the day watch when their
14 assets are flying, that's when things are found and at
15 night time when they go away, the cutters are
16 searching, as far as the Command Center, that's
17 planning for the next day's SAR operations?

18 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct. And you know,
19 getting any information from the on-sea assets, the
20 search is still active with the cutter searching. So
21 standing by for any reports from them which we had not
22 received any through the night watches.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Are the cutters finding
24 anything at night?

25 OS2 [REDACTED] I don't believe they did find

1 anything from what I recall. Everything was located in
2 daytime searches from the aircraft.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Getting back to
4 Paul's question, how often would you do a reverse
5 drift?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] I would be depending on the
7 scenario.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I mean how often have
9 you had to do that?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] I've maybe done it once or
11 twice in my career. It's not that often. Again, it
12 depends on the scenario. And I can't speak to if the
13 day watch thought about that, maybe if they ran models,
14 but didn't go. I can't speak to that. I wasn't there
15 for that portion.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Anything else for October
17 5th? And the last day, the next day was Tuesday,
18 October 6th.

19 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you tell us about that
21 watch?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] First just to make sure I'm on
23 track, can you tell me again the suspension date, was
24 that -- when we suspended, because I know I was off
25 going for the suspension date. I was there for the

1 suspension date actually. Just to make sure I have my
2 calendar correct.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think the
4 suspension happened on Wednesday, the 7th. I think it
5 was the 7th.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: I'm not sure.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I swore I wrote that
8 down.

9 OS2 [REDACTED] Because that would kind of let
10 me know where I stand because I recall my last midwatch
11 of the set was our suspension, was when we granted
12 suspension.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who told us that?
14 Someone just told us that.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm Googling.

16 OS2 [REDACTED] I'm wondering if it was
17 Tuesday evening.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The 7th.

19 OS2 [REDACTED] And that's Wednesday?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. I'm Googling.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. That does sound about
22 right though. But do you remember you were on watch?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It was my first day
24 in town. Or maybe it was the 8th, actually. Hold on a
25 minute. It was my first day there. I flew on the 7th

1 which was Wednesday, so Thursday. I can see how you're
2 not remembering.

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Yes.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: You remember the last day of
5 three watches was --

6 OS2 [REDACTED] Right, from what I recall is
7 the suspension process.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Can you tell us about that
9 watch?

10 OS2 [REDACTED] The night of the suspension
11 process?

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes.

13 OS2 [REDACTED] So again, we'd have to find
14 out what day it was, but I can speak to that day. So
15 for the suspension, we go through a check sheet, a
16 suspension check list which basically we list all the
17 searches from day one until current time, what asset it
18 was, when they searched, percentage of search
19 completion. Compile all of that and then brief our
20 chain of command for suspension. I remember that night
21 coming in, everything was kind of already lined up for
22 me. [REDACTED] had the day watch and he kind of already had
23 everything prepped. Of course, our SMC was already
24 letting us know, hey, we're going to be gearing for
25 suspension so that that gives us time to plan

1 appropriately. So all the paperwork had kind of been
2 in order already and I just kind of made sure to fix it
3 up and fill in the details on the paperwork.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: And the suspension would
5 happen the following day, the following watch?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] It would happen, once you
7 brief for suspension it would happen, once the
8 concurrence had been granted. So the night that we
9 suspended that I was on watch, I think it might have
10 been around 7 or 8 o'clock, I can't be sure of the
11 exact time, but Captain Coggershaw (phonetic) who was
12 SMC, we got him on the phone, the entire chain of
13 command, up to Admiral Bushman. At that time I
14 provided a brief to the chain of command, articulated
15 the reasons for suspension and the command, Captain
16 Coggershaw granted suspension with the concurrence of
17 Admiral Bushman.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: So this was like an hour into
19 your watch?

20 OS2 [REDACTED] It could have been an hour,
21 maybe two hours into the watch. I'm not exactly 100
22 percent sure. Suspension was granted, to be granted at
23 sunset. Of course, we never grant at exactly sunset,
24 so it might have been a half an hour after, an hour
25 after. I'm not exactly sure.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, so you briefed the SMC
2 and the Admiral by phone?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct. Yes, via conference
4 call.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: And it was accepted?

6 OS2 [REDACTED] Right, yes.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: So essentially somewhere
8 around sunset?

9 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: So what happens when the SAR
11 is suspended?

12 OS2 [REDACTED] Once search and rescue
13 operations are suspended, begins a lot of
14 administrative work as I was stating earlier,
15 finalizing those search patterns that had been done.
16 Basically, we were reviewing them, making sure that
17 they're finalized. Advising assets that the search had
18 been suspended. At that point, they resume normal
19 operations. And then cleaning up administrative work,
20 of course with our documentation and making sure
21 everything is documented correctly.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you were
24 briefing for suspension, what type of supporting
25 evidence or I guess what do you base this on? Or are

1 you just telling them everything that you all had done
2 to this point and what the results are?

3 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. There's actually a
4 blurb I read which I'm sure it's in our MISLE
5 documentation. It was basically a paragraph stating
6 the articulation for suspension. And again, yes, sir,
7 it does go over the course of events of the case and
8 then we articulate the reasons why suspension should be
9 granted. The probability of survival detection aid
10 gave the crew members 120 hours in the water and I
11 think we were at 154 at this point. I'd have to look
12 up in our documentation So the probability of survival
13 models, we had passed that window of survivability.
14 That's one reason.

15 Second reason if the assumption were to be
16 made that the crew members did abandon ship at last
17 communications, they would have experienced Category 4
18 hurricane conditions which his very unlikely to survive
19 in Category 4 conditions treading water.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They also talk about
21 the cumulative search.

22 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct, yes, sir. And then
23 we highlight the search numbers. This is how much we
24 had searched. This is how many hours we have searched
25 for and this is our probability of success, the POS,

1 the number.

2 Again, I don't want to speak to the
3 specifics of those. Those are very detailed numbers,
4 but they have been documented.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: Exact probability of success
6 and the how many searches or sorties that --

7 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct, yes. Hours searched,
8 square nautical miles searched.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Anything else on this
10 topic? Patty?

11 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: When you talked about the
12 120 hours and you said it went more like 150.

13 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

14 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: That's starting from the
15 time you lost communication with the ship?

16 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. Right. The incident
17 time.

18 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: The incident time.

19 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

20 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: If for some reason, they
21 were still on the ship for another 24 hours --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We would have seen
23 the ship.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you the one that
25 calculates the time in the water?

1 OS2 [REDACTED] I didn't personally do that,
2 but the position that I do, we can calculate that, yes,
3 sir. So just for an example, if we get a call from a
4 mariner who said his wife -- this is a separate case,
5 his wife had fallen off of a boat at exactly 7 o'clock,
6 that's when we would start that time.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In this case, who
8 calculated the 120 hour?

9 OS2 [REDACTED] The day watch had. [REDACTED]
10 [REDACTED] watch again, he had kind of prepped all the
11 paperwork for me. They had done the survival models
12 and actually provided me with a -- basically a brief to
13 provide to the admiral and SMC, once the time had come
14 for suspension. So a lot of that legwork was already
15 done throughout the day.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you're describing
17 the process as it would have happened during the day
18 watch, not what you had done?

19 OS2 [REDACTED] Right. I had not personally
20 done the survival models. They had been done for me by
21 my coworkers and presented to me.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That only has to be
23 done once. If you get a description of somebody's
24 size, weight, height, male, female, you put those
25 parameters in, plus water temperatures. If not, you

1 can use an average. In southern waters like this, the
2 cold water model can't calculate beyond 122 hours.
3 That's why 122 hours is it for being in the water in
4 southern waters for survival. It just doesn't
5 calculate beyond that point.

6 Same thing in Alaska, if somebody went in
7 the water there, you put the same calculations in, they
8 may have ten hours of survival time, six hours of
9 function, or seven or eight hours of function time.
10 Function time is the time that you can actually save
11 yourself, keep your head above water, things like that.
12 Survivability time is after the functional time has
13 passed, the time that you'll stay alive until you
14 succumb to hypothermia, if not drowning. You'd
15 probably drown first.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me, so you're
17 saying that the tool that the Coast Guard is using here
18 cannot calculate more than 122 hours?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If anything because
20 of water temperatures. It's beyond the calculation.
21 Because it's a cold water tool. It's actually for cold
22 water.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the survivability
24 could actually be beyond 122 hours.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, but it also

1 calculates -- because you're then looking for somebody
2 who is probably in a life raft, because even a life
3 raft is a hypothermia issue, but if you have somebody
4 in a life raft, the next biggest killer will be
5 dehydration and it does calculate dehydration if you're
6 in a life raft or if you're on shore somewhere.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you're in a life
8 raft, you may have water supply.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You may have water.
10 So we tend to -- I guess we tend to look at the worst
11 case scenario on that. A life raft in that type of
12 seas tumbles and all the supplies fall out. But 122
13 hours is a long time for a search. So that's just the
14 limitations of the science behind the model. There are
15 people who can explain it a hundred times better than
16 we can, the people that developed it. They're still
17 around in the Coast Guard, but it's -- the hypothermia
18 part is really meant for my part of the world more than
19 this part of the world.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, that makes
21 sense.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But it gives you at
23 least a tool to measure by. The old way we did it was
24 a graph and if you went with that graph in the IMSAR
25 (phonetic) Manual it would basically kind of go to

1 infinity. We can't go to infinity on searching.

2 But the other thing to look at in this
3 search is that objects were found in the water that
4 came from that ship and a body in a survival suit was
5 found, so that tells you the probability of success
6 there, that their search is successful if they were
7 searching in the right area. That was all validated.
8 And that's taken into account, too, when you're looking
9 to suspend a case. Were you successful at all in
10 finding anything? Yes, they were.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Does anybody else have any
12 questions for [REDACTED]

13 OS2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did he say [REDACTED]

15 OS2 [REDACTED] The chief before me.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: For [REDACTED] for anything else?
17 Ready to close off this interview?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm just curious,
19 when you give the suspension brief, is there any
20 discussion that this event, we've expended X number of
21 dollars?

22 OS2 [REDACTED] Negative.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I was just curious.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A little background
25 on paying for SAR, it's in our budget, so it's always

1 budgeted for at the beginning of the fiscal year.
2 We're going to do -- these millions of dollars in
3 search and rescue, so it is never a concern of ours
4 when we're sending assets out and we're searching. And
5 it's never in any of our discussions. In all my years
6 in suspending cases or talking about SAR, did we ever
7 say oh, we're spending too much money on it.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's good.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And we also don't
10 charge for SAR because that would mean people would
11 hesitate to call us and we don't want that either, and
12 people die.

13 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: I have several more. So
14 this became a high profile incident. Did it just go up
15 as far as the admiral or did -- at one point somebody
16 said you know, Washington was watching this.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [REDACTED] would you like
18 to explain this critical incident reporting process?

19 OS2 [REDACTED] I can. I can speak to it,
20 just a little bit of the basics. So of course, cases
21 like this get briefed up to LAN (phonetic) area. LAN is
22 going to brief headquarters, Atlantic Area. They're
23 going to brief headquarters in D.C. And then, of
24 course, at that point our commandant is going to have
25 visibility on the case.

1 As far as any conversations between my chain
2 of command and higher than my level here, I can't speak
3 to that, but --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There is an actual
5 process. It's called critical asset reporting. And
6 after something like this starts being a major marine
7 casualty, that's one of the triggers for this. And the
8 report starts by the Command Center here, calling
9 Headquarters Command Center, National Command Center, I
10 have a critical incident report and they set up a phone
11 tree conference call. And the watch stander, whoever
12 took the initial calls, whoever called in will brief
13 basically very high-ranking people in DHS and Coast
14 Guard and some other agencies that may be interested.
15 And then they start a battle rhythm again with a
16 follow-up call a half an hour later and then a set
17 number of calls throughout the day as the case
18 progresses. I looked in, when I was looking at your
19 MISLE, I saw I think at least 12 different reports that
20 we're adding in the MISLE. So yes, it was at the
21 Secretary level, at least, in this case. It was at
22 headquarters and it was in Washington, D.C. and it was
23 beyond just the Coast Guard's interest.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: So when the case gets
25 suspended, we're still looking for the contracted out

1 tugs in the recovery mode, I guess.

2 OS2 [REDACTED] Right.

3 MR. FURUKAWA: Are any -- nothing from the
4 Coast Guard is out there in the recovery mode?

5 OS2 [REDACTED] No. Once the search has been
6 suspended, we have suspended it at that point.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: You're off to duties,
8 assigned, further duties assigned.

9 OS2 [REDACTED] Correct.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Anything else?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are they still out
12 there?

13 MS. FINSTERBUSCH: They were out there
14 yesterday, or at least one was.

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay, let's see. So [REDACTED]
16 is there anything you'd like to add or change?

17 OS2 [REDACTED] At this point, no.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Are there any
19 questions we should have asked you, but did not?

20 OS2 [REDACTED] No, sir.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And it is -- the time
22 is 1958 and we are closing the interview with OS2

23 [REDACTED]

24 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
25 off the record at 7:58 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of OS2 [REDACTED]
Miami, FL

DATE: 10-13-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 39 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

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